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RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 1420
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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2515
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2855
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5737
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1493
RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR 0120
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 0296
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 1508
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0093
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0506
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0075
RUEHKU/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT 0460
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY BAKU 0014
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0170
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 0057
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SUBJECT: INDONESIA HOSTS INAUGURAL BALI DEMOCRACY FORUM
MEETING

REF: JAKARTA 2170 AND PREVIOUS

JAKARTA 00002266 001.2 OF 003

11. (U) This message is Sensitive but Unclassified -- Please handle accordingly.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: Indonesia hosted the inaugural meeting of the Bali Democracy Forum (BDF), December 10-11. The event was attended by 32 Asian countries, and seven observer countries from Europe and North America. The U.S. was represented by the Ambassador.

13. (SBU) SUMMARY (Con'd): The GOI set the tone for the discussions, presenting ideas on how to promote regional democracy. Indonesia's foreign minister clearly enunciated the need for BDF to reflect liberal democratic values, and not just Asian values proposed by some countries. The Institute for Peace and Democracy established under the BDF has received sufficient funding to begin concrete democracy-building programs. The GOI is interested in linking BDF to the USG's Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership initiative through joint training activities. END SUMMARY.

INDONESIAN PRESIDENT KICKS OFF BDF

¶4. (SBU) Indonesia hosted the inaugural meeting of the Bali Democracy Forum, December 10-11. President Yudhoyono described BDF in his opening remarks as the "first inter-governmental forum in Asia about democracy." Noting that Indonesia's own road to democracy was difficult, he emphasized that "we overcame" and "as a result, Indonesia today is better, stronger and more united." He added, "I do not believe in the notion that democracy is not for Asia."

SOLID PARTICIPATION

¶5. (SBU) The inaugural meeting was co-chaired by Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. Thirty-two Asian countries participated--from Kazakhstan to New Zealand and Timor Leste (Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao) to Syria (represented by its Charge). Four heads of state attended, including the Sultan of Brunei, along with many ministers. The U.S. and six other Western countries attended as observers. Ambassador Hume attended the opening session, along with a representative from DRL who attended the entire conference. Umar Hadi, a key advisor to Foreign Minister Yudhoyono and the conference's main organizer, told DepPol/C that President Yudhoyono noted positively the "strong" U.S. representation at an event in which it was an observer.

INDONESIA STRESSES DEMOCRATIC VALUES

¶6. (SBU) Many of the remarks at the meeting were platitudes on each country's distinct notion of democracy: China on "socialist democracy," Singapore on rule-of-law, Malaysia on "Asian values," and so forth. Others, such as the Maldives,

JAKARTA 00002266 002.2 OF 003

Timor Leste and Mongolia made pleas for practical help in bolstering their own fledgling systems. Indonesia, the Philippines and Australia kept the discussion grounded in more widely accepted democratic values, Indonesia being the most outspoken. One of Burma's deputy foreign ministers (U Kyaw Thu) attended but bowed out of the opportunity to make remarks. China's head of delegation was Yang Wenchang, President of the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs.

¶7. (SBU) The Indonesian hosts were very active. Foreign Minister Wirajuda and two Indonesian participants--senior Parliamentarian Theo Sambuaga and prominent think tanker Dewi Fortuna Anwar--all advocated for liberal democratic values. Wirajuda, who ran the proceedings, related that although Indonesia's economy grew strongly under authoritarianism, the system was not sustainable because of lack of political development. Sambuaga cited "civil liberties, equality and tolerance" as bedrock democratic principles. Dewi Fortuna Anwar pointed out at the end of the conference that future meetings need to include civil society. Participants need to honestly talk about their shortcomings in order for there to be a meaningful dialogue, she added. Most significantly, Wirajuda supported his Indonesian colleagues while politely refuting closing statements by Singapore, China, and Malaysia which had emphasized "common Asian values." Wirajuda affirmed, "We do have a set of common values although we cannot ignore each of our own traditional values," clearly referring to Indonesia's own democratic system, and those of other liberal democracies.

¶8. (SBU) Wirajuda presented the "Chairman's Conclusion" at the end of the conference, stating that the BDF would:

- Be an inter-governmental forum, not an organization.
- Be inclusive of all countries in the region.
- Be an "Indonesian initiative" to "garner a sense of shared ownership" among participants.
- Hold regular ministerials as well as technical workshops for officials.
- Be open to government observers from outside the region, as well as NGOs.

¶9. (SBU) Wirajuda's statement included a number of specific work priorities, such as: strengthening regional cooperation on democracy; consolidating democratic institutions (electoral processes; political parties; rule of law; legislative process, etc.); and, promoting good governance, interfaith dialogue, and equity, etc.

A NEW INSTITUTE

¶10. (SBU) The cornerstone of BDF is the Institute for Peace and Democracy located at Bali's University of Udayana. The Institute will organize workshops, conduct research, publish

JAKARTA 00002266 003.2 OF 003

papers and set up networks among experts. President Yudhoyono officially opened the institute on December 10. In addition to funding from Indonesia's Foreign Affairs Department, Australia is committing three million Australian dollars, mostly in the form of exchanges with Australian National University's Center for Democratic Institutions. Other countries expressed interest in providing funding.

A BDF LINK WITH APDP

¶11. (SBU) Several countries--South Korea, Mongolia and the Philippines--stressed the need for APDP to interact with other regional democracy-building bodies, the Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership (APDP) in particular. The GOI, which sent a representative to the October BDF in Seoul and observers to the Mongolian elections in June, told us that it is open to linkages with BDF. For example, Umar Hadi said BDF might be interested in APDP sponsoring a BDF training workshop for election monitors. The BDF will present more specific requests for support in the next few months.

A GOOD START

¶12. (SBU) All in all, the BDF seems off to a solid start. Indonesia appears to have its ducks in a row, realizing that it will take time for the BDF to gain traction. However, by hosting and co-chairing this event, Indonesia was able to set in motion a strong democratic agenda without being mired in consensus. In the meantime, BDF supports Indonesian national interests at several levels, including by:

- Raising Indonesia's international and regional profile; and,
- Leveraging democracy in the region, thus potentially reducing the threat that neighboring authoritarian regimes might pose to Indonesia's own democratic stability.

At the same time, the BDF helps President Yudhoyono with his credentials as an international statesman in the run-up to the 2009 presidential elections. USG support for BDF gives us another path to promote regional democracy. As importantly it demonstrates our support for Indonesian democratic leadership.

HUME